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SUBJECT: U.S.-EU DISCUSS RUSSIA, UKRAINE, MOLDOVA, BELARUS

REF: A. A) MINSK 352  
    **1**B. B) STATE 49374  
    **1**C. C) STATE 48021  
    **1**D. D) BRUSSELS 796

Classified By: USEU POLOFF TODD HUIZINGA, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

**11.** (C) SUMMARY: At U.S.-EU COEST consultations on March 16, EUR DAS Steven Pifer and EU interlocutors agreed that Russian progress on democracy and human rights and cooperation with the U.S. and EU in the former Soviet space were central to building a better strategic relationship with Russia. EU participants stressed that Russia must agree to extend the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which frames EU-Russia relations, to the 10 incoming EU member states without preconditions. On Ukraine, all agreed that strong U.S. and EU messages on democratization were key, especially in the run-up to the October elections. Discussion of Moldova centered on (1) reenergizing the process of resolving the break between Moldova and Transnistria, and (2) pressing the Russians to fulfill their OSCE "Istanbul commitments" to withdraw military materiel from Moldova. Pifer and EU counterparts also discussed their upcoming March 19 joint visit to Minsk to push Belarus for specific steps toward democracy and respect for human rights. We believe this U.S.-EU joint visit will strongly signal to Belarus the need for democratic change. END SUMMARY.

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EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS BASED ON SHARED VALUES?  
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**12.** (C) Irish EU Presidency COEST head Barbara Jones said the recent EU reassessment of EU-Russia relations had been salutary (ref D). The principal conclusion had been that the relationship has to be based on shared values of democracy, respect for human rights, and rule of law. Also, the EU had realized that a lack of coherence in the EU approach to Russia had compounded the problems in the relationship. Thus, the EU had agreed that a key issues/objectives paper would be prepared before each EU-Russia summit to focus discussions. In mandating this paper, the EU member states had given the EU presidency a clear signal to work closely with the Commission on Russia policy.

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U.S., EU SHARE CONCERN ON RUSSIA  
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**13.** (C) Pifer said the U.S. had undergone a process of reassessment or recalibration of U.S.-Russian relations prior to the Secretary's visit to Moscow in January. Key concerns were the same as the EU's: democracy issues, the Yukos affair, the Duma elections, and Russia's actions in the former Soviet space. Pifer agreed that an apparently widening gap in democratic values was complicating the building of a strategic partnership with Russia.

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RUSSIA AND ENLARGED EU: BUMPY ROAD  
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**14.** (C) Gerhard Lohan, Head of the Russia/Ukraine/Moldova/Belarus Unit of the European Commission Directorate-General for External Relations, raised the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), the basic framework for EU-Russia relations. He said it was critical that Russia extend the PCA without preconditions to the ten new EU member states by the time they accede to the EU on May 1. Anything else, he said, would be a "serious violation" of the PCA as such. He said Russia had given the EU a list of 14 issues that Russia wanted to see resolved before the May 1 enlargement. Lohan said the EU was "addressing" those issues, and wanted to "double-track" the process: Russia would extend the PCA now, and the EU would agree to work with Russia on resolving the 14 issues. Lohan lamented that the Russians, however, wanted to put the question on hold until the EU-Russia Ministerial, which would be very late (the Ministerial, originally scheduled for March 11, was postponed because of Putin's cabinet reshuffle; now the EU is shooting for a date in mid- to late April). At an EU-Russia Political Directors' meeting on March 22, the EU plans to press for a Russian statement that it will extend the PCA by May 1, according to Lohan.

**15.** (C) Pifer asked how many of the 14 issues were serious

Russian concerns. Lohan replied that close to ten of them, mostly economic issues and questions related to visas and movement of people (especially related to Kaliningrad), were legitimate. He said the Russians had also raised concerns about treatment of Russian minorities in the Baltic states, and had even thrown in "noisy aircraft transition standards" for good measure.

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EU UNCHR 60 CHECHNYA RESOLUTION  
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16. (C) Jones reported that, since Russia had rejected the EU proposal to have a Chairman's statement on Chechnya at the upcoming UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) in Geneva, the EU was now about to circulate a draft UNCHR resolution. She said the EU was counting on U.S. support (she made this point three times), and would share the draft with the U.S. as soon as the EU had reached internal agreement on the language. Pifer replied that the USG was engaged in interagency discussions on how to handle Chechnya at the UNCHR, and would inform the EU of the outcome of those deliberations.

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CHECHNYA EU SECURITY PROBLEM  
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17. (C) Pifer said his impression was that Russia's focus in Chechnya was "normalization" -- but it was hard to see any Russian plans on how to move forward in Chechnya other than simply asserting that the situation was normalizing. Pifer pointed out the difficulty of finding leverage on Chechnya other than moral suasion and public criticism, neither of which had moved Putin in the past. Jones said that, with the Chechen terrorist trend toward suicide bombing and the latest UN High Commissioner for Refugees report showing Russia as the highest growth source of refugees to the EU, Chechnya was a looming human rights and security problem for the EU -- the empty talk about normalization could not be allowed to continue.

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RUSSIA AND FORMER SOVIET SPACE  
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18. (C) The EU participants stressed Russian reluctance to talk with the EU about Moldova, Georgia, Belarus and other countries in the former Soviet space. Pifer said the U.S. was emphasizing to the Russians that the USG's having interests in the former Soviet space should not translate into a zero-sum game between the U.S. and Russia. The Secretary had focused during his Moscow visit on U.S.-Russia

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cooperation in Georgia, and Putin had explicitly affirmed Georgia's right to decide about the presence of foreign troops on its territory. Of course, Pifer added, whether Putin's affirmation would be reflected in upcoming base negotiations with the Georgians remained to be seen.

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UKRAINE: OCTOBER ELECTIONS WATERSHED  
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19. (C) Pifer and Jones agreed that the October presidential election would be a watershed for Ukraine -- a free and fair election would be a huge step toward consolidation of democracy, and the opposite would be a huge setback. Pifer and Jones also underscored the multiplier effect of strong, coordinated U.S. and EU messages on democracy. Pifer noted that Deputy Secretary Armitage would visit Kiev on March 24-25 and would carry a strong message on democracy. Peter McIvor of the Irish MFA said the EU was working on a declaration that would focus on the broad message of democratic standards, to be issued soon. The Irish were considering the merits of a public calling to account of the Kiev government and sought U.S. views. Pifer replied that the real question was to find incentives for President Kuchma on democracy issues. One possible incentive was to condition an invitation to the June NATO summit in Istanbul on progress toward respecting the opposition and toward a free and fair election in October. Also, one could couch the message to Kuchma in terms of his legacy -- he could claim a good record on the economy and on Ukraine's moving closer to Europe; his legacy on democracy could either underpin or undermine his record on those other points. EU participants agreed that Kuchma wants to move on (as opposed to running for a third term) but has an interest in endorsing a successor and arranging for a safe and secure retirement.

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EU ACTION PLAN FOR UKRAINE  
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110. (C) Lohan discussed the Commission's draft action plan for Ukraine. Kiev is buying into the plan for the short

term, but Ukraine's real focus is moving on within a few years to an association agreement with the medium-to-long-term perspective of EU membership. The Commission is trying to steer Ukraine toward thinking in terms of the European Neighborhood policy and away from the perspective of EU membership. EU resources would be tight through 2006. For the 2007-2013 financial framework, the Commission hoped to establish a new instrument for Neighborhood technical assistance. In May, Enlargement Commissioner Guenter Verheugen will report on the Action Plan's status. On upcoming high-level meetings with Ukraine, McIvor was adamant that the cancellation of the March 30 EU-Ukraine Ministerial had been due solely to an unavoidable conflict that arose in Irish FM Cowen's schedule. The EU-Ukraine summit (under the Dutch EU presidency) is scheduled for July 8 at The Hague.

¶11. (C) EU Council Ukraine/Moldova/Belarus Deskoff Carl Hartzell reported that, although the Commission has the lead on Ukraine in EU institutional terms, EU HighRep Javier Solana has taken a keen interest in Ukraine. Solana believes that Ukraine can be a test case for the EU's Neighborhood Policy. Jones noted that Ukraine is vulnerable to Russian energy pressure. Pifer agreed that Russia bears close watching, but he added that it may be incorrect to attribute the activities of Russian companies in Ukraine to official Russian policy rather than simply to Russian companies' acting in what they perceive to be their self interest.

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MOLDOVA: TRANSNISTRIA, ISTANBUL COMMITMENTS  
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¶12. (C) Pifer told the EU that Deputy Secretary Armitage expected to make a five-hour stopover in connection with his March 24-25 visit to Ukraine. This would be the most senior U.S. visit in about a decade. The U.S. continued to push for Russia's fulfillment of its Istanbul commitments, but there had been no removal of Russian ammunition from Moldova in at least three months. On a solution to the breakaway region of Transnistria, Pifer said that Russia needed to get over the failure of the Kozak Plan and reengage within the OSCE mediation effort. Pifer pushed the idea of a meeting of the U.S., EU, OSCE, Russia and Ukraine to examine how to move forward. Lohan reported on informal trilateral talks (Moldova, Ukraine, Commission) on border management. He said the parties had agreed to set up five joint border posts between Moldova and Ukraine, but not on the Ukrainian-Transnistrian border. Commission technical assistance was slotted to rise, and the EU was prepared to shift from loans to grants contingent on IMF conditionality.

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BELARUS: MARCH 19 JOINT U.S.-EU VISIT  
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¶13. (C) Pifer and EU counterparts used the Belarus discussion to coordinate strategy for their upcoming March 19 joint visit to Minsk to push Belarus for specific steps toward democracy and respect for human rights. This visit will be a follow-up to the joint U.S.-EU delivery of a demarche to Belarus on March 15 linking Belarus' relations with both the U.S. and the EU to specific progress on democracy and respect for human rights (refs A-C). Pifer said a further signal to Belarus on U.S. resolve would be that the U.S. Ambassador in Minsk, George Krol, and Pifer would depart Minsk together for Moscow to talk with the Russians about the situation in Belarus, in an effort to see if Moscow was prepared to press President Lukashenko on democracy questions (though expectations were modest).

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COMMENT: COORDINATION WITH EU KEY  
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¶14. (C) U.S. and EU views on all four of the countries discussed at this COEST remain very close. U.S.-EU policy coordination in the region will remain an important part of the USG approach, especially after the May 1 enlargement brings the EU to the COEST countries' borders. The March 19 joint visit of the U.S.-EU COEST Troika principals to Minsk will strongly signal to Belarus U.S. and Europe's common conviction of the need for democratic change. END COMMENT.

¶15. (U) This message has been cleared by EUR DAS Pifer.

FOSTER